

AUGUSTUS STEELE.

MAY 25, 1842.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. COWEN, from the Committee of Claims, made the following

REPORT :

The Committee of Claims, to which was referred the memorial of Augustus Steele, of Hillsborough county, in the Territory of Florida, report :

That the memorialist represents that, for a number of years past, he has been an inspector of the customs of the United States, in the collection district of St. Mark's, Florida, and that his station is Tampa Bay. He further represents that the practice of the Treasury Department required that he should be paid for his services through the collector of St. Mark's ; that it had been his invariable practice since he had been in the service, and it was required by the said collector, that he (the memorialist) should forward him, before payment, his vouchers for salary, hire of boatmen, &c. ; and that he believed this to be a rule of the Department, as it had been the practice of the collectors, and that it was the only mode in which his pay could be obtained ; that, on the 15th day of November, 1838, being then himself at St. Mark's, he made application for the sums then due him, and for which his accounts had been, (agreeably to the custom aforesaid,) rendered and receipted, but was informed by the collector, Ambrose Crane, that there were no funds in hand, at the time, for the payment of the expenses of the district ; that the memorialist then obtained from the collector a certificate that, on the 30th day of September, 1838, there was due him the sum of \$2,051 ; and that he also rendered to the collector his accounts and vouchers, receipted to the 31st day of December, 1838, and then returned to his post at Tampa Bay.

The memorialist further represents that, shortly after this, (to wit: in the latter part of November, 1838,) the said Crane absconded from the United States, without having paid him the sum that was declared to be due by said certificate, nor for the subsequent quarter, ending 31st December, 1838 ; that he never afterwards saw said collector, and, for *that obvious reason*, has no certificate for the last quarter, which had not become due when said Crane absconded ; that, therefore, there is due him from the Government the sum of \$2,531 63, which sum embraces the amount stated in said certificate, and the amount for the last quarter of 1838, after deducting the small amount endorsed on the certificate, which sum (accidentally obtained after said Crane had absconded) is all that has been received of said dues.

The memorialist therefore prays that an act be passed for his relief, directing the proper department to pay him the amount thus stated to be due.

Among the papers in this case is a copy of the certificate mentioned by the memorialist, together with the certificate of the clerk of Hillsborough county court, and are in the following words, viz :

" CUSTOM-HOUSE, ST. MARK'S,
" November 15, 1838,

" I certify that there is due to Augustus Steele, inspector of the customs at the port of Tampa, and the seamen employed in the revenue boat under his charge, the sum of two thousand fifty-four dollars, for services performed up to the thirtieth day of September, 1838 inclusive.

" AMBROSE CRANE, *Collector.*"

" TERRITORY OF FLORIDA,
" Hillsborough County.

" I certify that I have compared the foregoing, and the endorsement on the back thereof, with the original certificate this day presented me, and that it is a true copy therefrom.

" Given under my hand and seal of court, this 14th day of January, 1840.

" MANUEL OLEVILLES, *Clerk H. C. C.*"

" Received, Tampa, February, 1839, from Ambrose Crane, Esq., the sum of one hundred and fifty-eight $\frac{37}{100}$ dollars in part for the amount due within.

" AUGUSTUS STEELE."

These certificates are the only evidence offered in support of this claim, and, if genuine, are not authenticated in such a manner as to make them evidence of a still existing claim ; and, in order to obtain information on the state of the petitioner's claim, a letter was written by the Hon. David Russell, then chairman of the Committee of Claims, to the Secretary of the Treasury, bearing date the 6th January, 1841, who received, enclosed in the Secretary's answer, a statement from T. L. Smith, Register of the Treasury, which is in the following words and figures, vizs :

" TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
" Register's Office, January 8, 1841.

" SIR: In compliance with your reference of the letter and accompanying papers of the Hon. D. Russell, I have examined the accounts of Ambrose Crane, late collector of St. Mark's, and find that he has been credited on the receipt of Augustus Steele and others with the following payments :

" To Augustus Steele for the quarter ending 30th	
June, 1837	\$136 50
" To Augustus Steele for the quarter ending 30th	
September, 1837	138 00
" To Augustus Steele for the quarter ending 31st	
December, 1837	276 00

"And for additional compensation authorized by the Secretaries of the Treasury, from the 1st April to the 30th September, 1837				\$274 50	
					\$825 00
"To additional compensation authorized by the Secretaries of the Treasury, for the quarter ending 31st March, 1838				270 00	
"To additional compensation authorized by the Secretaries of the Treasury, for the quarter ending 30th June, 1838				270 00	
"To additional compensation authorized by the Secretaries of the Treasury, for the quarter ending 30th September, 1838				270 00	
"To additional compensation authorized by the Secretaries of the Treasury, for the quarter ending 31st December, 1838				270 00	
					1,095 00
					<u>\$1,920 00</u>

"Mr. Crane has been credited also for payments made during the above period to the boatmen at Tampa Bay, amounting to \$2,520, or \$360 per quarter. The payments were credited on receipts *witnessed* by Augustus Steele.

"The credits above mentioned having been made on receipts duly attested, and given for the specific sums, and for the periods stated, it would appear that Mr. Steele had been fully paid for the services and for the time referred to in his memorial. It may be observed, however, that the collectors at some of the small ports, not having funds on hand, obtained receipts from inspectors and others, to authorize the amounts to be passed to their credit at the Treasury, and thereon predicate a requisition for advances; at the same time, in lieu of payment, gave a certificate of the amounts due.

"From the representations of Mr. Steele, it is probable a similar arrangement was made with him by the collector, who, having left the country, neglected to take up his certificate or due bill.

"I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

"T. L. SMITH.

"Hon. LEVI WOODBURY,

"*Secretary of the Treasury.*"

From the foregoing statement of this claim, it is obvious that, however the facts may be, the evidence does not prove that any thing is due to the claimant. The committee therefore recommend to the House for adoption the following resolution:

Resolved, That the petitioner is not entitled to relief.

